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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 06/27/08

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1) TOP HEADLINES

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denuclearization

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, June 26

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

June 27, 2008

09:31

Met Mainichi Shimbun President Yutaka Asahina at the Kantei. Later

met Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka.

10:25

Met Waseda University President Katsuhiko Usui and others. Met Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Ota, joined by Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Saka. Saka stayed behind.

11:20

Met Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura, joined by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Futahashi. Attended an award ceremony for contributors to establishing gender-equality society.

12:15

Met Machimura.

13:00

Attended a ministerial meeting on soaring oil prices

14:42

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Attended a forum on energy conservation in households sponsored by METI at the Grand Prince Hotel Akasaka.

15:55

Met Cabinet Intelligence Director Mitani.

16:31

Met Chairman Funada of the research council on realizing a nation based on the creativity of science and technology.

17:03

Met ASJA International Chairman Tan Jong Lek and others. Followed by Machimura.

17:59

Met at the Grand Prince Hotel Akasaka with LDP Diet Affairs Committee members, including Chairman Oshima, with Machimura and Secretary General Ibuki present.

18:36

Returned to his official residence.

4) U.S. to delist North Korea as state sponsor of terrorism;  
Six-party talks to resume

MAINICHI (Top Play) (Lead paragraph)  
June 27, 2008

In return for North Korea's provision of a declaration of its nuclear programs to China following an agreement at the six-party talks, U.S. President George W. Bush announced on June 26 at the White House that his administration has decided to remove North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism and has notified the Congress of its decision. The Bush administration also started procedures to lift some sanctions against Pyongyang under the U.S. Trading with the Enemy Act. North Korea on the 26th presented the nuclear declaration to China, the host nation of the Six-Party Talks, based on the six-party agreement. With Washington taking action to delist the North as a state sponsor of terrorism, which the DPRK sees as symbolic of Washington's hostile policy against it, the North Korean nuclear issue and relations with the U.S. have now entered a new phase. Japan, which has called on Washington to make a cautious decision on delisting Pyongyang, will likely find it increasingly difficult to resolve the issue of abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents.

5) U.S. to continue pressure: Bush

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)  
June 27, 2008

WASHINGTON-U.S. President Bush, meeting the press at the White House in the wake of North Korea's declaration of its nuclear programs, announced that the United States will delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism and call off its application of the Trading

with the Enemy Act to North Korea. Touching on the issue of Japanese nationals abducted to North Korea, Bush said the United States "will not forget" the abducted Japanese people, adding that the United States will cooperate closely with Japan and will continue to pressure North Korea for a solution. Bush noted that the period of 45 days until the delisting becomes effective will be an important period for North Korea to show a serious cooperative stance. He also

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indicated that the United States would carefully watch North Korea's action.

6) Fukuda emphasizes close contact with U.S.

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)  
June 27, 2008

The government is taking North Korea's declaration of its nuclear programs and the United States' steps to delist the North as a state sponsor of terrorism as progress toward a settlement of the nuclear issue. The government also plans to apply pressure on Pyongyang during the 45 days before the North is delisted by calling for the thorough verification of its declaration.

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda last evening told reporters at his official residence: "There still remains the abduction issue. We are going to deal with the matter while keeping close contact (between Japan and the United States) as before." A reporter pointed out the possibility that Japan might lose its "card" of talks with the North. In response Fukuda said, "I don't think that way at all." Tokyo wants to swiftly determine the timeframe and form of the North's reinvestigation into the abduction issue, as was agreed upon in recent Japan-DPRK talks.

7) Japan to prioritize cooperation with U.S.

ASAHI (Page 1) (Abridged)  
June 27, 2008

Prime Minister Fukuda, in his reply to a question from reporters, remarked yesterday that he does not think at all that Japan will lose leverage for dealing with the issue of Japanese nationals abducted to North Korea with the United States delisting North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. The government has opposed delisting North Korea with no progress on the abduction issue. However, the government judges that it would be better for Japan and the United States not to get out of step now.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura called White House National Security Adviser Hadley yesterday evening and told him that the Japanese people are shocked even though the delisting is in line with a determined course of action. Machimura asked Hadley to answer Japan's concern over the abduction issue.

Foreign Minister Koumura, in reply to a question from reporters, answered yesterday evening that North Korea's declaration of its nuclear programs was "good in itself." He added: "The question is what is in it. We will have to verify it sufficiently."

A senior official of the Foreign Ministry explained: "We didn't want delisting, but if there is the impression that there is a fissure in the Japan-U.S. alliance, that'll be playing right into the hands of North Korea." The United States also showed consideration for Japan, with U.S. President Bush underscoring in his statement yesterday that the United States will continue to cooperate with Japan on the abduction issue.

8) Machimura: Delisting decision a shock to Japanese people

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 27, 2008

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Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura had a telephone conversation with NSC Advisor for National Security Affairs Stephen Hadley last night and said regarding the U.S. decision to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism:

"Although the decision is in line with a fixed policy course, the Japanese people have been greatly shocked by it. I hope that the U.S., keeping this in mind, will deal with the issues of North Korea's nuclear program and Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents."

Hadley reportedly emphasized:

"The main reason President Bush held the press conference (on the morning of June 26, local time) was because he wanted to appeal directly to the Japanese people that Japan and the U.S. will cooperate (in dealing with North Korea)."

9) U.S. removal of North Korea from list of terrorist-sponsoring nations deals a heavy blow to Fukuda diplomacy, even though there is modicum of appreciation for tackling the nuclear issue

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpts)  
June 27, 2008

The U.S. government's planned removal of North Korea from the list of terrorist-sponsoring nations after receiving its nuclear declaration effectively takes away the diplomatic card being used to resolve Japan's abduction problem, and for the Fukuda administration, some see this as a heavy blow. On the other hand, within the ruling camp, some lawmakers see this development as a positive step.

Prime Minister Fukuda yesterday met with Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka at the official residence and said: "The U.S. (President) went to the trouble of calling me by phone, and told me that the U.S. and Japan would continue to tackle the abduction issue together." He praised the phone call on the 25th from President Bush. However, even within the Foreign Ministry, there are icy views, with one official confiding, "The President's telephone call was nothing but a defense mechanism so that the U.S. would not be inundated by fierce reactions to the delisting decision."

On the question of the decision by Japan to unilaterally remove or ease a part of its sanctions have brought out strong voices of doubt. One source connected to Japan-DRPK relations said: "Since Japan went first in its plan to ease sanctions, it can no longer tell the U.S. to stop theirs. What a mess." Even from within the ruling camp, voices of criticism are emerging, with one junior lawmaker saying, "This would have been inconceivable under the Abe administration, which was severe toward North Korea." Although Komeito's head Ota gave his measured appreciation for the nuclear declaration, he stressed, "The abduction issue must never be let to falter."

10) Machimura: "Japanese people shocked at U.S. plan to delist North Korea as terrorism sponsor," voices concern about abduction issue left behind

SANKEI (Top Play)  
June 27, 2008

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North Korea on June 26 handed over a declaration of its nuclear programs and activities to China, which chairs the six-party talks. In return, the U.S. government notified Congress of its decision to delist the North as a state sponsor of terrorism. On the issue of North Korea's past abductions of Japanese citizens, President Bush emphasized: "The United States will never forget the abduction of Japanese citizen by North Korea." Now that Tokyo has lost an effective card, i.e., the sanctions, in negotiating with Pyongyang, it is uncertain to what extent the government will be able to press the other side to comply with its promises, including the implementation of a reinvestigation into the abduction issue. The government will be put to the test in how it responds to this new

issue.

The U.S. government's decision to remove North Korea from its list of terrorist-sponsoring states has deprived Japan of an effective card in pressing the DPK for a settlement of the abduction issue, dealing it a serious blow. Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura, conversing by phone last night with NSC Adviser Stephen Hadley, stressed: "The Japanese people are greatly shocked" by the U.S. decision to delist the North. Some lawmakers in the Liberal Democratic Party have begun to take the pessimistic view that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's stance of giving priority to "dialogue" over "pressure" might result in undercutting the abduction issue.

In response to a question by reporters at the Kantei last night, Fukuda brushed off concerns that Japan might lose its leverage in promoting negotiations with North Korea due to the U.S. plan to delist North Korea, saying: "That's not my way of seeing it."

11) North Korea to be removed from U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism: Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea disappointed; Distrust building up toward Japanese government, as well

NIKKEI (Page 43) (Excerpts)  
June 27, 2008

The U.S. government on June 26 announced that President Bush had notified Congress of his intention to delist North Korea from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. The families of abductees, who have been pinning their hopes on the U.S. using its "power" to tackle the abduction issue, expressed despair and disappointment with one member saying, "(President Bush) said that he would never forget the abduction issue, but we are now disappointed." Although the families showed a degree of understanding about the difficulty of this diplomatic issue, they aimed their distrust at the Japanese government, as well, for having gone along with the U.S. decision to remove Pyongyang from the blacklist.

Shigeo Iizuka (70), brother of Yaeko Taguchi (22 at the time of the abduction) and the chairman of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea, told reporters in Tokyo yesterday evening, "I feel helpless as things are decided far away from us." He expressed anxiety: "The designation of North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism has been our biggest leverage (among the measures at Japan's disposal to tackle the abduction issue). If the Japanese government also lifts sanctions, what will it use as a bargaining chip? (The delisting of North Korea from the list) represents a backward step in resolving the issue."

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Members of the association visited the U.S. and sought cooperation from President Bush and the Congress on resolving the abduction issue. President Bush said that he would never forget the abduction issue. However, Iizuka expressed his dissatisfaction, "Looking at the result, it is inconsistent."

Sakie Yokota (72), the mother of Megumi Yokota (13 at the time of abduction), who actually met with President Bush about two years ago, indicated some understanding of the difficulties of negotiations with North Korea, "I know that diplomacy is delicate." But she then stressed: "It is too early to remove North Korea from the list. It is very regrettable."

She added, "The abduction and nuclear issue are equally important." She said with a painful look: "Our country cannot help its people. What kind of country is it? I do not want the Japanese government to disappoint us. We want it to now tackle the issue seriously."

Takeshi Matsumoto (61), elder brother of Kyoko Masumoto (29 at the time of abduction), yesterday evening expressed his frustration "Why is it necessary for the U.S. to press ahead with talks with North Korea by lowering the barriers against North Korea?" Kiyoko Arimoto (82), the mother of Keiko Arimoto (23 at the time of abduction), urged the Japanese side regarding its future response, "I do not want the Japanese government to fall in line with the U.S. delisting

of North Korea and lift its sanctions against that country."

12) Japan loses effective card in negotiating with North Korea on abduction issue; 45-day delisting process key

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)

June 27, 2008

The U.S. began to take procedures on June 26 to take North Korea off its list of terrorism sponsors. During the period of 45 days until the U.S. delisting decision comes into effect, the Japanese government intends to strictly verify the declaration produced by Pyongyang on its nuclear programs and step up efforts to bring about progress on the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents. But now that the U.S. has implied its willingness to take a more conciliatory stance toward the North by giving up an effective diplomatic card, the options Japan can take have been narrowed.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura said in a press conference last night: "North Korea needs Japanese funds and technologies." He indicated that economic and energy aid will become more influential as Japan's diplomatic card.

The joint statement issued in the six-party talks in September 2005 specified that if North Korea complies with the promise it made in the statement to scrap all its nuclear programs, the countries concerned will provide the nation with economic and energy aid. But Japan, which is expected to become the largest financial donor to the North, has made it clear that it will not extend aid before progress is made on the abduction issue. This policy stance is expected to be Japan's major trump card in future negotiations with the North.

The most critical juncture for Japan in negotiations with North Korea is August 11, after the delisting process ends. Until then, Japan wants to bring about specific progress on the abduction issue in cooperation with the U.S. in the six-party talks and bilateral

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talks with the North.

Despite Japan's repeated opposition to delisting prior to progress on the abduction issue, the U.S. easily went ahead with the decision. Many Japanese are dissatisfied with this. A government official who once served as prime minister grumbled: "The U.S. gave priority to relations with North Korea over the Japan-U.S. Alliance."

What has disappointed Japan further is the lack of inclusion in the North's declaration of its nuclear weapons despite Japan's demand.

The Japanese government intends to officially remain cool and maintain and strengthen cooperation with the U.S., as a senior Foreign Ministry official said: "If we allow North Korea to believe that a crack has appeared between Japan and the U.S., that will just benefit North Korea."

13) Some ruling party members taking harsh view; Negative impact on Japan-U.S. alliance feared

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)

June 27, 2008

A harsh view is spreading across the political community, including the ruling bloc, in reaction to the United States' announcement to begin steps to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura in a press conference yesterday emphasized Japan's intention to resolve the abduction issue in cooperation with the United States, saying: "(The delisting) was expected. The United States has said that it would make efforts for the settlement of the abduction issue in its own position." Taku Yamasaki, chair of the Parliamentary League to Promote Diplomatic Normalization between Japan and North Korea and a former LDP vice president, too, positively described the delisting as a "process necessary for the denuclearization of the Korean

Peninsula."

New Komeito Representative Akihiro Ota made requests to the government, saying to reporters: "Although we can give a positive assessment to North Korea's declaration of its nuclear programs to a certain extent, what is in it is more important. Measures to resolve the abduction issue must not waver."

However, one leading LDP lawmaker in a rare criticism of Washington, stated: "the United States is repeating the same thing." He implied the precedent in which the former Clinton administration failed to stop North Korea's nuclear development despite its "conciliatory policy" toward that country, as seen in then Secretary of State Albright's visit to Pyongyang in the closing days of the administration. The LDP executive expressed his discontent with the United States, noting, "With the Bush presidency approaching its end, the U.S. administration has excessively lowered the barrier for North Korea."

The Fukuda administration is trying to keep pace with the United States, which wants to move the nuclear issue forward despite no progress having been made on the abduction issue. Tokyo is motivated by its desire to place high priority on the Japan-U.S. alliance.

But some ruling and opposition party members fear that Washington's

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decision to delist the North might negatively impact not only on the abduction issue but also the Japan-U.S. alliance.

Takeo Hiranuma, chair of the parliamentary league on the abduction issue, commented: "We fear that (the delisting) might cause the very foundation of the Japan-U.S. alliance to split." Meanwhile, DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa in a press conference pointed out the imbalance in the alliance, saying: "I think (the people) have come to realize once again that Japan's wishful thinking is not taken into consideration when (the United States) reaches a decision."

14) Saiki, Hill agree to resume six-party talks as early as possible to discuss verification of North's nuclear declaration

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 27, 2008

Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Akitaka Saiki and U.S Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill met last night in Kyoto. The Japanese and U.S. chief negotiators to the six-party talks agreed that the verification of North Korea's declaration of its nuclear programs is important. They confirmed a policy of resuming the six-party talks as early as possible in order to discuss how to verify the declaration.

15) A/S Hill emphasizes cooperation for resolving abduction issue

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 27, 2008

Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director-General Akitaka Saiki, Japan's chief delegate to the six-party talks, held a meeting with his U.S. counterpart, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, at a Kyoto hotel yesterday. A/S Hill told Saiki that in the wake of Pyongyang's declaration of its nuclear activities, the United States will begin steps to take North Korea off its list of terrorism-sponsoring nations, while stressing the U.S. stance to continue extending cooperation for the settlement of the abduction issue. The two shared the need to hold the next round of the six-party talks quickly in order to reach an agreement on how to verify the North's declaration.

The meeting coincided with China's announcement on the North's declaration, narrowly allowing the United States to inform Japan of its planned steps to delist the North in advance. Foreign Minister Masahiko Kourumura is scheduled to meet with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on June 27.

16) G8 foreign ministerial: Chairman's statement to urge North Korea

to abandon nuclear weapons, calls for cooperation to stabilize Afghan

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 27, 2008

The Group of Eight (G8) foreign ministers' two-day meeting opened yesterday evening in Kyoto. In an evening session last night, the foreign ministers discussed the situations of Afghanistan and Burma (Myanmar), as well as the war on terror. After the meeting, they released a joint statement. A chairman's statement, which will be adopted this afternoon, is expected to urge North Korea to completely abandon its nuclear weapons.

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A joint statement on Afghanistan proposed the creation of a framework for coordination on aid programs by the G8 countries, and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The aim is to eradicate breeding grounds for terrorism in Afghanistan. The G8 foreign ministers in the joint statement called on countries neighboring Afghanistan to fulfill constructive roles to bring about stability to that country.

The G8 foreign ministerial will discuss the North Korean issue this morning. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will explain Washington's policy of delisting Pyongyang as a state sponsor of terrorism. Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura will then ask G8 other members for cooperate to resolve the abduction issue.

17) Japanese, British, Italian foreign ministers agree that attention should be paid to North Korea even after nuclear declaration

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 27, 2008

Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura met yesterday with his British counterpart David Miliband and his Italian counterpart Franco Frattini separately at a hotel in Kyoto. In the separate meetings, the three foreign ministers shared the perception in general that attention should be paid to North Korea's response after it has presented a declaration of its nuclear programs.

Miliband pointed out: "It is necessary to pay attention to what North Korea says." Frattini also expressed a similar view. Koumura and Frattini agreed that it is important for G8 members to issue a strong message in order to have Pyongyang abandon its nuclear weapons. In his meeting with Frattini, Koumura sought international cooperation, saying: "Resolving not only the nuclear issue but also the abduction issue is important."

18) Court orders gov't to pay 146 million yen in compensation for Futenma noise

SANKEI (Page 2) (Abridged)  
June 27, 2008

The Naha District Court, in its ruling handed down yesterday at its Okinawa branch, ordered the government to pay a total of about 146 million yen in compensation to 396 residents living in the neighborhood of the U.S. military's Futenma airfield in the Okinawa prefectural city of Ginowan for damage to their health from noise. The court rejected a demand from the plaintiffs to pay compensation for future damage and stop helicopter takeoffs and landings in the early morning and evening. The plaintiffs plan to appeal the ruling.

Gist of Futenma lawsuit

? The court orders the state to pay a total of about 146 million yen in compensation.  
? The state is not in a position to be allowed to restrict U.S. military operations at Futenma airfield, and there is no reason for demanding flight suspension.

? Futenma airfield has defects in its installation and management

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stipulated in the Civil Code under the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, and the state is liable for compensation.

? The local residents fear U.S. military aircraft crashes, and their mental suffering is growing.

? The daily amount of compensation is 100 yen for residents in areas where the weighted equivalent continuous perceived noise level (WECPNL) is 75 and 200 yen for those in areas where WECPNL is at 180.

? It is inappropriate to institute a lawsuit for future damages.

SCHIEFFER